



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2021-014 - To authorize the special use of the property known as 2700 East Cary Street for the purpose of a freestanding sign, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: February 1, 2021

PETITIONER

Eliza Heyward

LOCATION

2700 East Cary Street

PURPOSE

To authorize the special use of the property known as 2700 East Cary Street for the purpose of a freestanding sign, upon certain terms and conditions.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The applicant is requesting a special use permit to allow for the installation of a free-standing sign pertaining to the office use of the property. The property is located in the B-5 Central Business District, and free-standing signs are not a permitted sign type in this district. A special use permit is therefore required.

Staff finds that the proposed sign would not adversely impact the overall characteristics of the existing neighborhood, the pedestrian experience, visual continuity, or traffic safety in this portion of the corridor. The location of the free-standing sign is at the terminus of Cary Street in front of an existing surface parking lot. Moreover, the proposed sign pertains to office use which is consistent with the Master Plan.

Staff finds that with the ordinance conditions the safeguards contained within the City Charter, relative to the Special Use Permits, are met. Specifically, staff finds the proposed rezoning would not be detrimental to the general welfare of the community involved and would not create congestion in the streets in the area involved.

Therefore staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The subject property consists of a 38,417 SF (.88 acre) parcel of land improved with a building containing office use. The property is located in the Shockoe Bottom neighborhood between South 26th and Pear Streets.

Proposed Special Use of the Property

Free-standing sign

Master Plan

The *Richmond 300* Master Plan recommends Corridor Mixed-Use for this property. Corridor Mixed-Use areas are found along major commercial corridors and envisioned to provide for medium- to medium high-density pedestrian- and transit-oriented development.

Development Style: The building size, density, and zoning districts for these areas may vary significantly depending on historical densities and neighborhood characteristics. Future development should generally complement existing context. Uses may be mixed horizontally in several buildings on a block or vertically within the same building. Developments continue introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity.

Ground Floor: Ground floor uses engage with, and enliven, the street. Monolithic walls are discouraged, while windows, doors, storefronts, and other features that allow transparency and interaction between building and street are encouraged. Active commercial ground floor uses are required on street-oriented commercial frontages.

Mobility: Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access are prioritized and accommodated. Bike parking is provided. Driveway entrances are required to be off alleys whenever possible; new driveways are prohibited on priority and principal streets. Parking areas are located within the structure and to the rear of buildings and require screening; shared parking requirements are encouraged.

Intensity: Buildings generally ranging from two to ten stories, based on street widths and depending on the historic context and stepping down in height adjacent to residential

areas. New buildings that are taller than historical buildings should step back from the build-to line after matching the height of the predominant cornice line of the block.

Primary Uses: Retail/office/ personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Single-family houses, institutional, and government.

Zoning and Ordinance Conditions

The properties are currently located in the B-5 Central Business District. The following zoning regulations are not being met by the proposal, warranting special use permit approval.

The proposal is to install a freestanding sign (38.5 square feet) for an existing office building. The property is located in the B-5 Central Business District and has an area of approximately 38,417 square feet. Please be advised that the following condition of the proposed freestanding sign does not comply with the current zoning regulations:

TYPES OF PERMITTED SIGNS: Wall signs, projecting signs, suspended signs and awning signs and canopy signs shall be permitted in the B-5 zoning district. Freestanding signs are not permitted in the zoning district.

Development conditions will be imposed by the special use permit ordinance, including:

3(a) The Special Use of the Property shall be as a freestanding sign, substantially as shown on the Plans.

(b) The dimensions and materials of the Special Use shall be substantially as shown on the Plans.

Surrounding Area

A mix of office, residential, commercial, and open space land uses are found in the area. A mix of M-1 and M-2 Industrial, and B-5 Central Business zoning districts surround the property.

Neighborhood Participation

The Shockoe Partnership civic association and area residents and property owners were notified of this application. Staff has not received any letters in support of, nor opposition to, the proposed Special Use Permit.

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